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978-0-521-87626-1 - Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World, 1780-1870

Tim Watson

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CARIBBEAN CULTURE AND BRITISH FICTION IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD, 1780–1870

Tim Watson challenges the idea that Caribbean colonies in the nineteenth century were outposts of empire easily relegated to the realm of tropical romance while the real story took place in Britain. Analysing pamphlets, newspapers, estate papers, trial transcripts, and missionary correspondence, this book recovers stories of ordinary West Indians, enslaved and free, as they made places for themselves in the empire and the Atlantic world, from the time of sugar tycoon Simon Taylor to the perspective of Samuel Ringgold Ward, African-American eyewitness to the 1865 Morant Bay rebellion. With readings of Maria Edgeworth and George Eliot, the book argues that the Caribbean occupied a prominent place in the development of English realism. However, Watson shows too that we must sometimes turn to imperial romance – which made protagonists of rebels and religious leaders, as in *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827) – to understand the realities of Caribbean cultural life.

TIM WATSON is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Miami.

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Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.

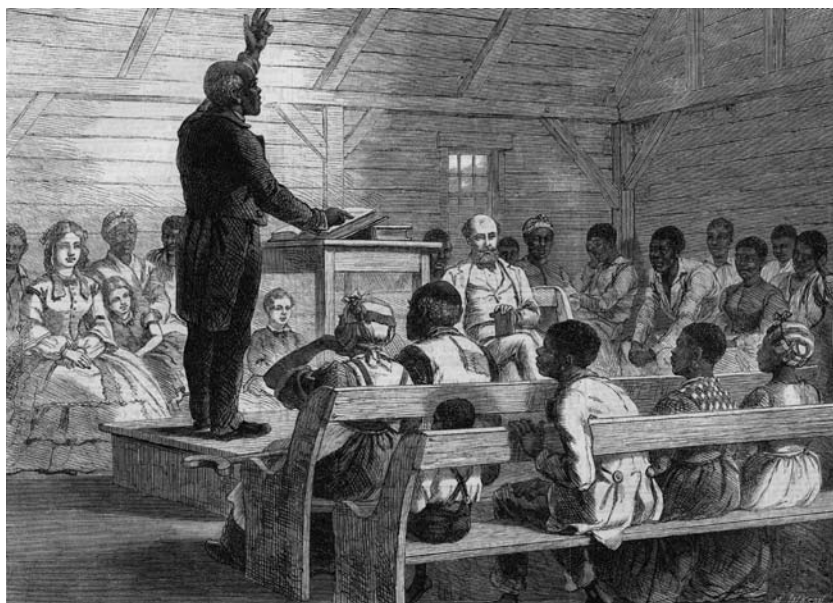
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Frontispiece 'Family Worship in a Plantation in South Carolina', engraved by
Mason Jackson, *Illustrated London News*, vol. 43, 5 December 1863

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For my parents, Pat and Roger Watson

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